Best Effort.

The weekday briefing on Australian telecommunications, data centres and AI infrastructure.

TODAY'S BRIEFING

Monday 9 November 2026

- Data-centre politics and finance lead the edition.
- NEXTDC has paused projects without customer contracts and is weighing sales of surplus sites after a 40 per cent share price fall, leaving its 170ha Lovely Banks purchase near Geelong in doubt.
- Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles said on 6 November 2026 that suburbs are the wrong place for data centres.
- Telstra, Optus and TPG Telecom each want 200MHz for 6G, against up to 515MHz on offer from the ACMA.

13 stories · **24 min** reading · **20** sources · Online at besteffort.au/editions/2026-11-09

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DATA CENTRES 1 OF 13

NEXTDC pauses uncontracted projects, clouding plans for Lovely Banks site near Geelong

NEXTDC has paused projects without customer contracts and is weighing sales of surplus development sites after a 40 per cent share price fall, leaving its 170ha Lovely Banks purchase near Geelong in doubt.

Best Effort desk · Mon 9 Nov 2026 · 1 source · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

Power delays at one Melbourne facility have flowed into forecasts, capital allocation and land holdings, while tighter Victorian planning rules and moratorium calls add pressure on where and how new data centres can be built.

NEXTDC's plans for a data centre at Lovely Banks, near Geelong, are in doubt after the company said it would halt some projects and consider selling land, the Geelong Times reported. The company acquired the 170ha site in June; the land had earlier been set aside for as many as 2,100 homes. No planning application has been lodged, although a nearby high-voltage transmission line makes the site a possible data centre location.

The review stems from delays in obtaining power for the expansion of NEXTDC's M3 facility in Melbourne. On 21 October the company cut its revenue and earnings forecasts by tens of millions of dollars because of those delays, and its shares then dropped 40 per cent. NEXTDC has since started examining its capital spending, which could include selling development sites it does not need in the near term.

Chief executive and managing director Craig Scroggie said the company was giving priority to projects backed by customer contracts. Scroggie said that with M3 revenue deferred, NEXTDC had "paused projects not backed by customer contracts and put that capital behind the capacity our customers have already contracted".

The Lovely Banks purchase had raised concerns about housing supply locally and led the City of Greater Geelong to ask for stronger protections and clearer planning rules for data centres. Separately, NEXTDC began building a facility on Obriens Road in Corio in May. Kapitol is the builder of the 2,100sqm project, which has a planned capacity of 4.4MW and is due for completion in the first half of 2027. More than 700 people have signed a petition opposing it.

The Victorian government has also tightened its data centre planning rules, citing concerns over energy and water demand. Under rules released in September, data centres are banned from residential zones and from areas near schools and childcare centres, and new facilities must be set back at least 150m from homes. Developers must also supply renewable generation and storage, and cool facilities with recycled or non-drinking water. Greens MP Sarah Mansfield and independent candidate Aleta Moriarty want a moratorium on new approvals, and councils belonging to the Municipal Association of Victoria have unanimously supported a statewide pause until a planning and sustainability framework exists.

REPORTING FROM

1 **Geelong Times** · Lovely Banks data centre plans uncertain after NEXTDC share price plunge

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

POLICY & REGULATION 2 OF 13

Internet Association of Australia asks Wells to rethink telco rules for small providers

The Internet Association of Australia and nine small and medium carriers have written to Communications Minister Anika Wells, warning that regulation aimed at large telcos is loading compliance costs onto hundreds of smaller operators and threatening competition.

Best Effort desk · Mon 9 Nov 2026 · 1 source · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

The letter puts the question of proportionality in consumer protection rules to the Minister while ACMA is consulting on the 2026 industry standard, and it frames the risk as reduced competition and choice, particularly in regional and remote areas.

The Internet Association of Australia (IAA) and its members have sent an open letter to Communications and Sport Minister Anika Wells, asking for a meeting on how telecommunications regulation is designed and applied and what it does to competition. The letter had the backing of nine small and medium carriers and carriage service providers when it was published.

It argues that rules prompted by the failures of a few large tier-1 providers are being applied across the whole industry, imposing heavy compliance costs on hundreds of providers that have done nothing wrong. The IAA said the Telecommunications (Consumer Protections) Industry Standard 2026, now the subject of ACMA consultation, is a priority concern.

IAA chief executive Narelle Clark said members back strong consumer protection, but that regulation was restricting the whole industry with little regard to whether obligations made sense for small operators. She said the trend would have "a chilling effect on competition in the market as small operators are increasingly pushed out, which is not ultimately in the interest of consumers".

The association warned that a growing compliance burden, disproportionate obligations and a lack of practical support from regulators and government would discourage new entrants and push existing providers to exit or merge. It said consumers could face fewer choices, higher prices, poorer service and less access in regional and remote areas, where small providers often serve communities that larger companies have left underserviced. Clark said challenger providers keep pressure on price, service quality and innovation.

Beyond the industry standard, the letter calls for coordinated reform through a telecommunications regulatory initiatives grid and consultation with the breadth of industry rather than only tier-1 telcos. It also seeks consolidation of the various consumer protection rules under one regulatory instrument, and obligations and liability that reflect a provider's size, role in the supply chain and type of service. The IAA wants a review of the threshold that defines a large provider, with matching thresholds for medium and small providers. It further asks for realistic templates that a telco could adopt to gain a safe harbour for compliance.

The IAA is inviting other providers who share the concerns to sign on by emailing its policy address. Clark said the association is asking government to back practical, workable measures that keep protections strong while keeping the market competitive.

REPORTING FROM

1 **Internet Association of Australia** · Media Release: Internet Association of Australia warns current approach to telco regulation will leave consumers worse off - Internet Association of Australia

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

DATA CENTRES 3 OF 13

Goodman seeks fast-track for 2150 homes opposite its Macquarie Park data centre

Goodman Group wants to build five towers of up to 60 storeys at 3-5 Talavera Road, across from its approved 135MW Project Apollo data centre. A state panel has backed fast-tracking, and the planning minister has yet to decide.

Best Effort desk · Mon 9 Nov 2026 · 2 sources · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

The scheme would put housing and data centre approvals on one street in a precinct with several other approved or proposed facilities, and it tests how state fast-track pathways deal with the noise, water and cumulative-impact concerns raised by local councils.

Goodman Group is proposing 2,150 homes in five towers of 45 to 60 storeys at 3-5 Talavera Road, Macquarie Park, opposite a $1.4 billion data centre it owns, Mingtiandi reported. On 14 October the NSW Housing Delivery Authority supported declaring the scheme a State Significant Development, and the planning minister has the final say.

The authority is chaired by Michael Coutts-Trotter, secretary of the Premier's Department, and concluded the project met its criteria and was of state significance as a major residential development. Goodman Property Services lodged it through the authority's pathway as shoptop housing, and it is not asking for a rezoning. Tom Gellibrand, who heads Infrastructure NSW, noted at the authority's briefing that current zoning already allows mixed use on the land, according to the transcript. The land currently holds an office building called The Park and the Park View Business Park, which mixes warehouse and office space.

Project Apollo, the 135MW facility at 4-10 Talavera Road, was approved by the state on 2 September, and a 1.2 hectare public park is planned between it and the towers. Its consent covers 36 rooftop evaporative cooling towers that can use up to 1.5 million kilolitres of water a year, plus 66 diesel generators of 2.8 megawatts each, restricted to 187 hours annually apart from unplanned outages. Noise limits are set at four neighbouring receivers, among them apartments, townhouses and a hotel, but not on the tower site. A noise study by SLR Consulting for Goodman placed the newly rezoned mixed-use land about 600 metres or more from the centre, and found four other approved or proposed data centres between 300 and 1,200 metres away.

The housing plan emerged roughly five weeks after Goodman dropped Project Mars, a 90MW data centre at Lane Cove West. That application attracted 374 submissions, nine in support, which The Urban Developer described as a record for a NSW data centre application. Goodman withdrew it six days after telling a Senate inquiry hearing that it had not secured a social licence.

The City of Ryde objected to Apollo and requested a cumulative risk assessment covering the clustered data centres. The council has not seen detailed plans for the towers, and mayor Trenton Brown warned that state-run pathways let big planning decisions be made "without proper strategic oversight." Asked how the data centre might affect residents, Goodman pointed to its role providing digital infrastructure on infill city land and described itself as a long-term owner, developer and manager.

If the minister makes the declaration, Goodman can file a full application, which the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure would assess on its merits. Goodman has not disclosed what the towers would cost. Goodman previously sold a Talavera Road site to Meriton in 2016 for a reported $200 million, and Meriton is building towers of up to 60 storeys there. Data centres represented 73 per cent of Goodman's $14.5 billion development work in progress at the end of March.

REPORTING FROM

1 **The Australian Developer** · Goodman plans 2,150 homes opposite its own $1.4b data centre

2 **The Urban Developer** · Goodman Plots 2150-Home Scheme Near Its Macquarie Park Data Centre

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

POLICY & REGULATION 4 OF 13

Marles says suburbs are the wrong place for data centres as politics heats up

Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles said on 6 November 2026 that suburbs are not the right place for data centres, as the Nationals attack the government's draft standards and US midterm results sharpen the debate.

Best Effort desk · Mon 9 Nov 2026 · 3 sources · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

Data-centre siting, power sourcing and community acceptance are becoming contested political questions in Australia just as government standards for large AI facilities head towards parliament, which bears on how and where operators can build.

Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles told ABC News Breakfast on Friday 6 November 2026 that suburbs are not the right place to build data centres. Asked whether the government wanted a ban on suburban data centres, Assistant Minister Andrew Leigh did not endorse one and pointed instead to government principles on electricity and water use. Leigh said the "basic principle of the Albanese government is ensuring that Australians get the benefits of data centres located in their communities".

Legislation for mandatory standards for large AI data centres is expected to go to parliament early next year. Under the proposed standards, facilities would have to pursue renewable power to fully offset their energy demand, backed by firming technology such as gas, batteries and hydro. ABC analysis said the government's proposed rules were expected by the end of the year and are aimed at attracting AI investment on what industry figures call "our terms".

Nationals leader Matt Canavan attacked the plan at a dairy farm in Kyabram, in north-central Victoria. He said the current approach was a "train wreck waiting to happen for our energy system" and that regional dairy farmers would bear the cost through higher energy prices. Greens leader David Shoebridge linked opposition to data centres in the US midterms to Australia, saying successful candidates there wanted to "oppose the rollout of AI data centres".

The US results are driving much of the commentary. The ABC reported about 41 proposals were put to voters in ten states and all but one were on track to lose. An NBC News exit poll found three-quarters of voters opposed data centres in their community, according to the ABC. The ABC also noted Australia's 163 data centres have a combined capacity of about 1.6 gigawatts, according to Data Centres Australia, against about 50 gigawatts in the US by

one estimate. Recent polling found 44 per cent of Australians would oppose a data centre built near them, the ABC said.

The economic argument is also live. Reserve Bank governor Michele Bullock said in the week of the decision that investment, including data-centre-related investment, had been stronger than expected and added to inflationary pressures. Deloitte Access Economics reported on Thursday an investment pipeline that included 37 data centres worth $141bn, a 36 per cent increase in a year. The Guardian noted Deloitte's warning that construction demand and inflation pressures arrive now while any productivity dividend may come much later.

REPORTING FROM

1. **abc.net.au** · Federal politics: Marles says suburbs not right for data centres — as it happened
2. **Internationly** · US rejection of data centres is a warning for Australia — and maybe leverage - ABC News & Headlines
3. **the Guardian** · Australians are yet to see the benefits of AI and datacentres – and US midterms show they could be political kryptonite | Datacentres

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

DATA CENTRES 5 OF 13

Stockland drops data centre from Arncliffe masterplan after community campaign

Stockland and John Boyd Properties have removed a proposed data centre from the amended plan for the former Kogarah Golf Club site on the Cooks River, while keeping a logistics precinct valued at about $3.5 billion.

Best Effort desk · Mon 9 Nov 2026 · 2 sources · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

Planning and community consent are emerging as constraints on where Sydney data centre capacity can be built, with councils and residents seeking a bigger say while the state government prepares its response to the parliamentary inquiry.

Stockland and John Boyd Properties have pulled a planned data centre from their revised Concept Masterplan for the old Kogarah Golf Club site at Arncliffe, in Sydney's south. The building would have risen four storeys and

covered 25,400 square metres, on a parcel of roughly 18.3 hectares beside the Cooks River. The ABC put the value of the wider logistics precinct at about $3.5 billion, and that part of the project continues.

A Stockland spokesperson said the partners are now concentrating on a "world class logistics precinct which does not include a data centre as part of the amended Concept Masterplan". The spokesperson said the location suits logistics because it is near Sydney Airport, Port Botany and major transport links, and could also take uses such as retail and hospitality. The amended plan also offers a public foreshore link of one kilometre along the river, Pemulwuy Park at 14 hectares to be delivered in future, and road and active-transport upgrades. Stockland said it will keep talking with stakeholders as planning for the precinct proceeds.

Stockland has not said that opposition prompted the change, although the ABC reported the decision as a withdrawal following community backlash. According to the ABC, the data centre drew local resistance after it became public in July last year. Stop the Cooks River AI Project (SCRAP), a group with hundreds of members formed in August, campaigned against it. Organiser Paddy Gibson said residents were celebrating a "very good win for people power". He pointed to risks for the river's fragile ecology, along with power use and possible water contamination. SCRAP said it will keep campaigning against the logistics hub on the riverfront and for a ban on all new AI data centres.

Bayside Greens councillor Peter Strong, who led council's opposition, called the outcome "very heartening". He said the withdrawal sent a message to the state government that "the council should have more of a veto on these data centres". The NSW government issued a data centre policy framework in August, and a parliamentary inquiry report said guidelines should have existed "before developing any planning fast-track processes for these projects". The government has until February next year to respond to the report.

The ABC described the decision as the latest in a run of Sydney data centre proposals dropped after community opposition, including an AirTrunk project in Lane Cove and another in Guildford in September. AirTrunk said it will not proceed with a 140MW facility at 16-20 Mars Road, Lane Cove West, next to its SYD2 campus. An AirTrunk spokesperson told Capital Brief that steep terrain and limited scale made the site unsuitable, and that the company is turning to sites including Kurri Kurri and Mickleham. Tech Insider noted that no outlet has reported coordination between Stockland and AirTrunk, or any AirTrunk role at Arncliffe.

REPORTING FROM

1 **Tech Insider** · Stockland Drops Arncliffe Data Centre: 3 Facts [2026]

2 **abc.net.au** · Controversial Sydney AI data centre at Cooks River scrapped following community backlash

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

POLICY & REGULATION 6 OF 13

Telco penalties lift about 40 times under new consumer safeguards law

Under the Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Consumer Safeguards) Act 2026, the ACMA can step in directly against rule-breaking providers, and maximum fines rise above $10 million. A new registration scheme will also cover carriage service providers.

Best Effort desk · Mon 9 Nov 2026 · 1 source · 1 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

Carriers, MVNOs and other providers face a far higher cost for non-compliance, with a regulator that can act directly and, through registration, stop providers with serious compliance failures from operating.

Telcos that breach industry rules now face maximum penalties about 40 times higher than before, at more than $10 million, after the passage of the Telecommunications Amendment (Enhancing Consumer Safeguards) Act 2026. The ceiling can go higher in some circumstances, and a penalty may be tied to the benefit a company gained from the breach or to its turnover.

The Act equips the Australian Communications and Media Authority to move faster and to take enforcement action itself against providers that break the rules. It tightens the enforcement of industry codes, standards and determinations, which cover safeguards for customers in financial hardship and for people affected by domestic, family and sexual violence.

It also creates a Carriage Service Provider registration scheme aimed at making the industry more transparent and accountable. Through that scheme the ACMA gains wider oversight of providers and the ability to keep those with serious compliance failures out of the market.

Minister for Communications Anika Wells said the reforms would help make sure Australians are treated fairly by their telecommunications providers. Wells said, "Strengthening consumer protections means a fairer and better system for everyone," and added that Australians should be able to trust providers to have their interests at heart.

REPORTING FROM

1 **Public Spectrum** · Australia increases penalties for telcos breaching industry rules

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

POLICY & REGULATION 7 OF 13

Carriers and ACMA face off over 6G spectrum as first phones near 2030

Telstra, Optus and TPG Telecom say they each need 200MHz to start 6G in 2029, while the ACMA has put up to 515MHz on the table. Regional coverage, satellite reliance and vendor security are also in dispute.

Best Effort desk · Mon 9 Nov 2026 · 2 sources · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

How the 7GHz and low-band spectrum is allocated will shape the capacity each carrier starts with and what it can afford to spend on networks, while regional coverage and dependence on foreign satellites remain open policy questions.

Handsets for 6G are expected around 2030, yet the contest over the airwaves that will carry them has already begun in Australia. The ACMA and the federal government have to settle how much spectrum each carrier gets, the price, and whether regional areas end up relying on offshore satellites. Consumer group ACAN said those choices will influence Australian connectivity well into the 2040s.

Telstra, Optus and TPG Telecom each say a 200-megahertz block is needed for a competitive 6G launch from 2029, which adds up to 600MHz. The regulator has reserved up to 515MHz, so at least one carrier would begin with a smaller share. Luke Coleman, chief executive of the Australian Telecommunications Alliance, wants that band bundled with the adjacent lower 7GHz band and auctioned once. A consultation paper from the ACMA on licensing the band is due by the end of 2026.

An independent report commissioned by the ACMA put the cost of the three carriers retaining their current spectrum at about $6.8 billion over six years. Telsyte analyst Alvin Lee said that bill will weigh on 6G investment, and TPG's Giovanni Chiarelli said each dollar spent on spectrum is a dollar not spent building networks.

The carriers say 5G taught them lessons. Optus chief technology officer Sri Amirthalingam said the biggest one is that "customers don't adopt a new technology because the industry gives it a new number". The main benefit the carriers point to for 6G is capacity in crowded places such as stadiums and train stations.

For regional Australia, the industry's proposal is the 600MHz band now used by free-to-air TV, whose signals travel further and penetrate buildings more easily. The federal government is consulting on the future of free-to-air TV until 26 November. ACAN chief executive Carol Bennett said, "Left to commercial logic, the cities will be served first, and regional Australia will be waiting again, just as it was with 5G," and added that the ACMA renewed existing licences with no coverage requirements.

Telstra and Optus have both struck satellite-to-phone deals with Starlink, though Amirthalingam cautioned that much of that infrastructure is beyond Australian control. Elon Musk said in late October that SpaceX curbed Ukraine's Starlink service because the military used it for drone strikes, a claim Ukrainian officials dispute. The 6G standard is also contested, with Finland's foreign ministry technology unit head Aki Enkenberg calling it "China versus the rest". Australia barred Huawei and ZTE from 5G in 2018.

REPORTING FROM

1 **Zotpaper** · 6G phones due around 2030 as spectrum fight takes shape

2 **KhanList** · 6G phones arrive in 2030. The fight over the airwaves has already begun

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

CARRIERS & NETWORKS 8 OF 13

Spark chair says FY26 results show business heading the right way

Spark New Zealand hit all its FY26 guidance, with mobile service revenue growing again and free cash flow up 18.5 per cent to $308 million, Chair Vince Hawksworth told shareholders on Friday.

Best Effort desk · Mon 9 Nov 2026 · 1 source · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

Spark's results show mobile returning to growth while earnings edged lower, with the data centre sale and the ongoing Digital Services review shaping its balance sheet and portfolio.

Spark New Zealand came in within guidance on every FY26 measure, Chair Vince Hawksworth told shareholders at the annual meeting in Auckland on Friday, pointing to renewed growth in mobile service revenue and a free cash flow rise of 18.5 per cent to $308 million. Speaking as Chair for the first time, Hawksworth said the results were "not end goals in themselves, but they are

important indicators that the business is moving in the right direction."

Adjusted revenue held steady at $3.7 billion. Adjusted EBITDAI slipped 2.4 per cent to $1.035 billion, and adjusted net profit after tax eased 0.9 per cent to $225 million. The Board set a full-year dividend of 16 cents a share, made up of an 8 cent final payment that is 50 per cent imputed.

Hawksworth said selling a 75 per cent interest in the data centre business brought in net proceeds of about $462 million and put net debt back at target levels. Spark holds on to a 25 per cent stake in Ten Peaks. The strategic review of Digital Services, which spans cloud, IT services, data and AI, is still under way, and the next update is due with half year results in February. He also paid tribute to outgoing Chair Justine Smyth, who sat on the Board for 15 years, seven of them leading it.

Chief Executive Jolie Hodson said total mobile revenue grew 4.4 per cent, while mobile service revenue rose 1.1 per cent to $998 million. Hodson called this "an important signal of Spark moving from stabilisation back toward growth". She pointed to the October launch of Spark Upgrader, which has attracted more than 34,000 registrations, a 40 per cent increase in handset volumes over the iPhone 18 season, and a Skinny tie-up with Woolworths' Everyday Rewards. Hodson said only 54 per cent of broadband customers also use Spark for mobile, which she saw as a natural opportunity to grow.

Hodson said Opensignal again named Spark as having New Zealand's best 5G network, with six outright category wins and three shared, and that customer satisfaction rose for a sixth year in a row. Spark Satellite, launched in April 2026, has connected more than 237,000 customers, who have used over 7.1 million megabytes of data and sent more than 323,000 text messages over satellite. Productivity benefits reached $40 million, and the IoT business now has 2.5 million connected devices.

Spark left FY27 guidance as it was, with adjusted EBITDAI of $1.01 billion to $1.08 billion, free cash flow of $300 million to $350 million and BAU capital expenditure of $350 million to $380 million. The target dividend is 16 to 18 cents a share, based on paying out 90 to 100 per cent of free cash flow, subject to Board approval. Hawksworth said economic activity remains subdued, though he hopes consumer and business confidence will keep stabilising and growing.

REPORTING FROM

1 **newswire.nz** · Spark Chair Vince Hawksworth Tells AGM FY26 Results "Moving in the Right Direction" — newswire.nz

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

AI INFRASTRUCTURE 9 OF 13

Marvell to buy Lumentum in $115 billion all-stock optics deal

Marvell Technology has signed a definitive agreement to acquire Lumentum for an enterprise value of $115 billion, joining two large data-centre optics suppliers. The deal follows a run of photonics investments driven by AI interconnect demand.

Best Effort desk · Mon 9 Nov 2026 · 2 sources · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

The deal would put a large share of the optical components used in AI data-centre networks under one owner, a development relevant to operators and hyperscalers building AI capacity in Australia and the region that buy this equipment. It remains subject to regulatory and shareholder approval, with closing expected in the first half of 2028.

Marvell Technology has signed a definitive merger agreement to acquire Lumentum for an enterprise value of $115 billion, bringing together two of the biggest players in data-centre optics. Tom's Hardware reported that the companies announced the deal in a joint press release dated 2 November.

Lumentum shareholders will receive 4.5 Marvell shares for each Lumentum share they hold, a package the companies value at about $1,132 per share. That figure is a 23.9 per cent premium to Lumentum's unaffected closing price on 28 October, the last trading day before reports of the deal moved the share price. Marvell's existing shareholders would own about 67 per cent of the combined company and Lumentum's about 33 per cent.

Bloomberg reported that the transaction is the second-largest tech deal ever, behind the SpaceX-xAI merger. Both boards approved the agreement unanimously, and closing is expected in the first half of 2028, subject to regulatory and shareholder approval.

EE Times framed the deal as evidence that silicon photonics has moved from a proposed answer to the power wall caused by interconnect inefficiency into an active market with an ecosystem ripe for exits. It cited a Woodside Capital Partners report that counted a series of recent deals over fifteen months, including Marvell's $3.54 billion purchase of Celestial AI and Nvidia's $2 billion investments in each of Coherent and Lumentum, followed by $3.2 billion more into Corning. Woodside's authors described the activity as a land grab for control points such as lasers, optical engines, packaging, test and foundry capacity, and said urgency will decline as the gaps fill.

Smaller companies are also attracting capital in optical circuit switching. Salience Labs raised $125 million in Series B funding, backed by Applied Ventures, AMD Ventures and Intel Capital, while Voyant Photonics said it is developing a chip-scale OCS engine for AI data-centre networks.

REPORTING FROM

1 **EE Times** · Silicon Photonics Hits the Big Time
2 **Tom's Hardware** · Marvell to buy Lumentum in $115 billion all-stock deal

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

POLICY & REGULATION 10 OF 13

Secretaries back open-weight AI for routine government work on sovereign infrastructure

A communique from the Secretaries Digital and Data Committee says open-weight models can be a secure, cost-effective choice for routine workloads if government hosts them. Home Affairs and the AI Safety Institute told a parliamentary committee the security picture is still unsettled.

Best Effort desk · Mon 9 Nov 2026 · 1 source · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

The communique shows senior public servants treating dependence on a few overseas AI providers as a resilience risk and favouring government-controlled hosting for routine work. Whether that is workable turns on agency capability, which Home Affairs treats as the first test, and on security settings still being worked through.

Department secretaries have told government that open-weight AI models could handle routine workloads securely and cheaply, as long as they run on infrastructure the government controls. The Secretaries Digital and Data Committee met on 24 September 2026 and released its communique on 6 November. Frontier models, it said, stay important for more specialised uses.

The stated reason is the risk of depending on a small number of overseas AI providers. The communique does not name a model, a workload or a cost. It also notes that evidence of benefits from AI across the Australian Public Service is emerging and uneven. Finance is developing a common method for

measuring those benefits with the Digital Transformation Agency (DTA) and agencies.

The DTA and Finance gave a joint opening statement to the Joint Select Committee on Artificial Intelligence on 30 October, with figures as at October 2026. They put the number of agencies and organisations engaged with GovAI Chat at 74, and staff using its chat function at more than 12,000. Thirteen agencies host AI solutions through GovAI, 133 chief AI officer appointments have been notified to Finance, and more than 100,000 staff have finished AI in government fundamentals training. Finance runs GovAI, which the two agencies described as a multimodel, multiprovider design that lessens reliance on any single supplier or technology. The hosting figure is relevant because an open-weight model on government infrastructure must be operated by an agency or by GovAI.

Asked at the same hearing about safety and security comparisons of open-weight and closed-weight models, Home Affairs acting first assistant secretary Timothy Neal said his department and the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) had advised on open-weight deployment since the 2025 direction on DeepSeek. Asked for the current rules, Neal said he would take the question on notice, then sketched them. Agencies need the ability to run the models, must take a risk-based approach and must follow ASD deployment guidance. Where security classified information is involved, agencies must use certified environments and show Home Affairs and ASD they have the capability and capacity. Neal said an agency's own capability is the first and most important component. First assistant secretary Greta Doherty said the wider question for government, critical infrastructure and the economy remains open and is work still under way.

Later that day, Dr Kate Conroy, general manager of the AI Safety Institute within the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, said the institute had been following open-weight models closely. She said emerging evidence raised many red flags about significant security risks, naming easy fine-tuning that can make a model behave in unwanted ways and manipulated models offered for download. Conroy also said open-weight models will be fine in some circumstances, and that workarounds exist for secure and air-gapped use but are not as simple as a replacement. The Hansard transcript is a proof that witnesses can still correct.

Home Affairs' answer on the current rules will come as a question on notice to the joint committee, with answers published on its website. The committee must present its final report by 30 November.

REPORTING FROM

1 **AI Geek** · Department secretaries say open-weight AI can be a secure, cost-effective option for routine government work on government infrastructure · AI Geek

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

FIBRE, SUBSEA & INTERCONNECT 11 OF 13

East Micronesia Cable completes Pacific Islands Forum submarine cable coverage

The East Micronesia Cable System, operational in 2026, gives Nauru, Tarawa in Kiribati and Kosrae in Micronesia their first direct submarine cable access, Innovando News reported. Every Pacific Islands Forum member is now connected to the global submarine cable network.

Best Effort desk · Mon 9 Nov 2026 · 1 source · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

For Australian industry and policy, the project shows Canberra using public financing to build cable routes that commercial revenue alone may not justify in small island economies. The report stresses that route diversity and domestic distribution networks will determine whether the new capacity delivers resilient service.

The East Micronesia Cable System became operational in 2026 and brings Nauru, Tarawa Atoll in Kiribati and Kosrae in the Federated States of Micronesia onto an international submarine cable for the first time, Innovando News reported. The report said its completion means all members of the Pacific Islands Forum are now connected to the global submarine cable network.

The network runs approximately 2.250 kilometres, in the report's notation, and was developed by six countries: the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Australia, Japan and the United States. The project is valued at about 135 million Australian dollars, of which about 65 million came from the Australian Government through the Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific. It is intended to improve internet access for over 100.000 people, a figure the report described as the population potentially eligible rather than certified new subscribers.

Until now the three islands relied mainly on satellite links for external connectivity. Innovando noted fibre can offer lower latency and higher aggregate capacity than geostationary satellites, but said the comparison is less clear-cut with low-earth orbit constellations. It said the cable does not make satellites redundant and instead adds a complementary connection method.

Australian ministers Penny Wong and Pat Conroy announced the completion on 1 September 2026, and the project was later presented at the Pacific Islands Forum leaders' meeting in Palau. The report said Canberra has allocated over 500 million Australian dollars to submarine connectivity in the Pacific and East Timor since 2018, and that the program has contributed to over 10.300 kilometres of new cable across nine countries.

Other recent systems follow different priorities. Tuvalu's Vaka Cable became operational in October 2025 as the country's first international undersea connection, at an estimated cost of about 56 million US dollars, or about AUD$80 million by the AIFFP's valuation. In Tonga, the Tu'i Vava'u Cable has operated since May 2026 as a second international link, after the main cable was out of service for over five weeks following the January 2022 Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai eruption.

Innovando cautioned that a second cable does not guarantee against interruptions, because route separation, landing points and power systems determine real redundancy. It also said benefits for health, education and business depend on terrestrial networks, mobile infrastructure and operator investment to carry traffic from landing stations to users. Further international connections are also of interest for Papua New Guinea, Palau and the Solomon Islands.

REPORTING FROM

1 **INNOVANDO NEWS** · Pacific completes its digital submarine cable network

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

POLICY & REGULATION 12 OF 13

ACMA proposes annual fees of A$17 to A$25 for each registered SMS sender ID

The ACMA wants to charge for every sender ID on its SMS register from 1 July 2027 to recover about A$1.6 million in yearly running costs. Existing registrants would have to re-apply and pay, and comments close on 4 December 2026.

Best Effort desk · Mon 9 Nov 2026 · 1 source · 2 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

The charges would shift part of the cost of the anti-scam sender ID register onto the organisations and telcos that use it, and the regulator itself flags that fees could deter registration and weaken consumer protection.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority has proposed charging organisations roughly A$17 to A$25 a year for each registered SMS sender ID, which could raise the cost of branded text messaging for businesses, charities and government agencies. The regulator published the proposal on 4 November 2026 to recover the cost of running its SMS Sender ID Register, and

plans to start the charges on 1 July 2027, subject to approval. Submissions are open until 5 pm AEDT on 4 December 2026.

Sender IDs let organisations show a name rather than a phone number on SMS or multimedia messages, and under the register's rules unregistered IDs are replaced with the label "Unverified". The ACMA cited 21,695 text-message scams reported to Scamwatch between 1 January and 7 October 2026, with reported losses above A$11.7 million.

Under the proposal, an application fee would be paid for each sender ID at the time of application, and the ACMA would not register or re-register an ID until it was paid. Registrations would last 12 months, and the fee would apply even if an application were rejected or an approved ID expired before the 12 months were up. Owners of IDs already on the register would have to re-apply through a new process and pay the fee when the arrangements start. The regulator is weighing whether all registrations should expire on 30 June each year or 12 months after each approval date.

The ACMA estimates the register costs A$1.6 million a year to operate, covering application processing, applicant verification, enquiries and system maintenance. The indicative fee is A$17 if there are an estimated 89,600 registered IDs by 30 June 2027, or A$25 based on about 62,400 IDs in October 2026. The fee could exceed A$25 if registrations fall below current levels, and the ACMA expects to review charges annually.

Application fees cannot recover everything. The ACMA said the Australian Government Charging Policy bars it from recovering the cost of administering the register rules and of compliance and enforcement through such fees, and it is separately considering a levy on telecommunications providers for some of those costs. Telcos that register sender IDs for customers would pay the fees and decide how to recover them. The regulator is also examining discounts or exemptions for charities, not-for-profits and government agencies, but has not decided who might qualify. It acknowledged a risk that uniform charges could hurt participation in the register and so weaken consumer protections.

The charge would be created by a determination made under the ACMA's governing legislation, with changes to the register's administration rules made at the same time. After reviewing submissions, the regulator will settle a charging model and put it to government, and it intends to consult separately on a Regulatory Charging Statement before any fees start. It has asked for views on the charging model, renewal period, payment arrangements and exemptions.

The register opened on 1 July 2026 with 39,562 registered sender IDs, and by 19 October had 62,406 across 42,148 businesses and organisations and 499 telecom providers. The proposed fees and renewal requirements are not yet in effect.

REPORTING FROM

1 **MediaNama World** · Australia proposes annual fees of up to $25 for registered SMS sender IDs

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.

WORLD 13 OF 13

Copper thieves cutting Auckland fibre, leaving about 10,000 people offline in one outage

New Zealand police say attempts to steal disused copper cable are damaging live fibre lines in Auckland. One recent outage in Swanson and Massey affected an estimated 10,000 people.

Best Effort desk · Mon 9 Nov 2026 · 2 sources · 1 min read

WHY IT MATTERS

The Auckland cases show how legacy copper left alongside operating fibre can expose live networks to physical damage, with one cut affecting thousands of customers and essential services such as schools.

Police in Auckland say thieves hunting for scrap copper are cutting into live fibre-optic cables, and that incidents involving telecommunications infrastructure are rising, RNZ reported on 6 November 2026. An estimated 10,000 people in the Swanson and Massey areas lost service in a recent outage caused by a damaged fibre cable.

Detective Sergeant Luke Blignaut said offenders are going after disused landline and internet copper cables that fibre has largely replaced. Because the fibre often runs alongside the old copper, he said, the thieves are mistaking it for copper and cutting it too. Blignaut told RNZ the problem "is becoming a pretty large issue that goes a lot further than just the theft of copper".

A similar incident cut internet at a Swanson school during an emergency involving a student. Staff had to retrieve the student's medical records manually from local servers, which delayed their response by 20 minutes.

Police are also targeting the market for the stolen metal and want scrap dealers to work with them. Blignaut said that "If scrap dealers are accepting this stolen copper, that is enabling these offenders to continue". He said telecommunications copper is easily identifiable, adding that "These are very large copper cables, and no average person who walks off the street should have access to it". Dealers who suspect anything should contact police immediately,

he said, and knowingly buying stolen telecommunications equipment is itself a criminal offence.

The reports do not give a cost estimate for the Auckland incidents or say which network operators were affected.

REPORTING FROM

1 **elocal** · Copper Thieves Leave Thousands Without Internet as Auckland Fibre Networks Come Under Attack

2 **RNZ** · Copper thieves causing widespread fibre outages in hunt for scrap metal

Written by AI from the reporting above. Quotes, numbers and names were checked against those sources before publication.